



pre-  
columbian  
america  
the new world

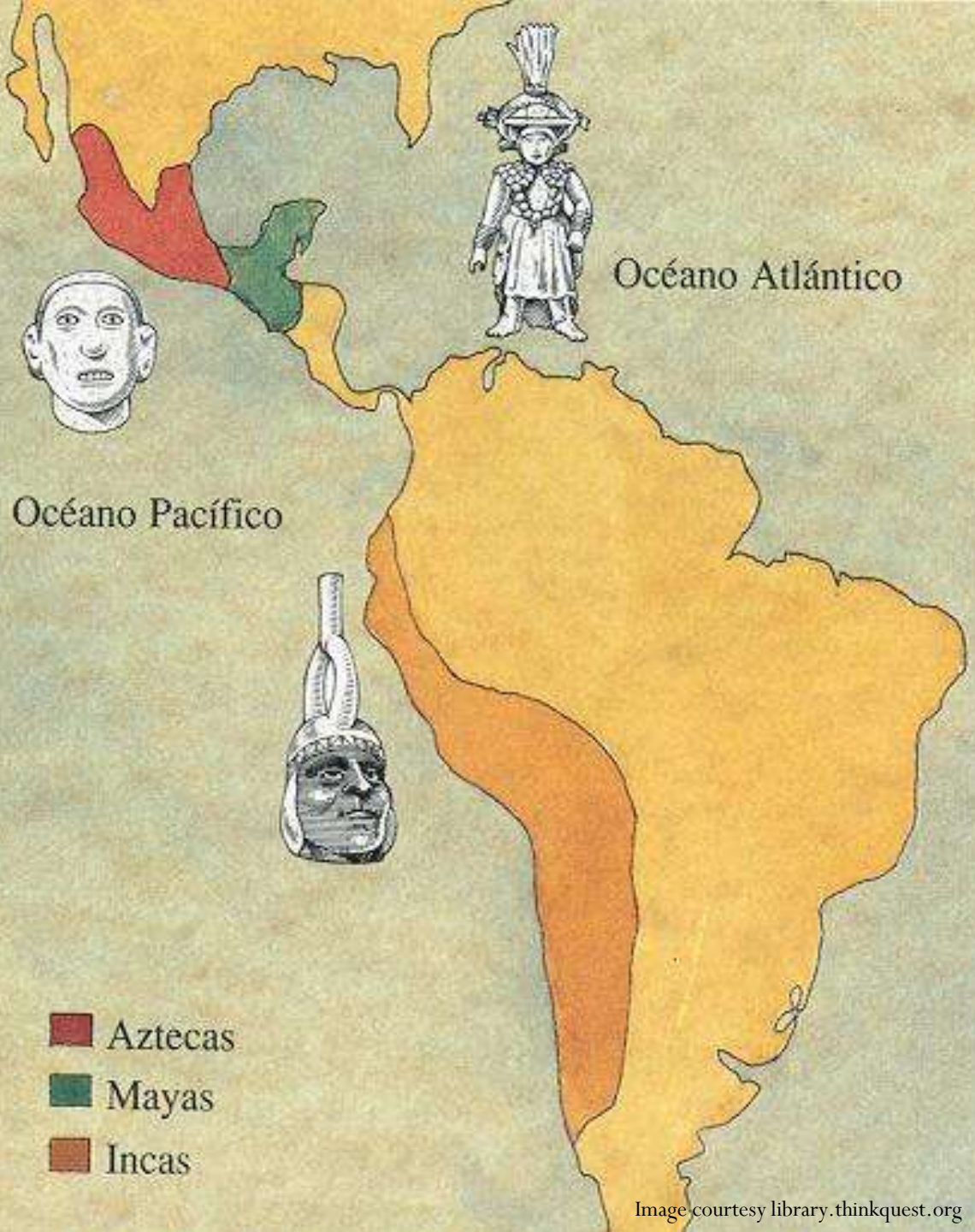
the maya

the inca

the aztecs



# timeline



## **The Maya**

800 B.C. - 900 A.D.

The Yucatan Peninsula

(Present day Mexico, parts of present-day Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador)

## **The Inca**

1200 A.D. - 1532 A.D.

The Andes Mountains

(Present day Peru, Ecuador and Chile)

## **The Aztecs**

1200 A.D. - 1519 A.D.

The Valley of Mexico

(Present day Mexico)



the maya

The jade death mask of Pakal, the great lord of Palenque.

*[ngm.nationalgeographic.com](http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com)*

# setting

- The entire region of the Mayan empire lay **south of the Tropic of Cancer**, in parts of **Mexico** and **Guatemala**.
- The Central part of the empire was covered by a **great Amazonian rainforest**, through which ran a powerful **river, Belize**.
- It was a **hot and humid** environment, and it rained everyday.







A Maya woman works on a backstrap loom. Her water lily headdress and decorated mat denote royal lineage.

*ngm.nationalgeographic.com*

# people

- They were immersed in the **measurement of time** and obsessed with their **highly advanced astronomical and religious calendars**.
- They even took opposing sides in **ball game matches** to **sacrifice the defeated in bloody rituals**.
- They were noted for their **elaborate ceremonial architecture**.
- **Tattooing** and **head-flattening** were occasionally practised, and the face and body were always painted
- They were **skilled farmers**, clearing large sections of **tropical rain forest** and, where groundwater was scarce, building sizeable **underground reservoirs** for the storage of rainwater.

# technology

- The lands were **poor in mineral wealth**- apart from some **obsidian** and **jade**, no gold or silver occurred naturally.
- Copper, bronze** emerged from other pre- Columbian populations such as Columbia and Equador.
- Trading** rafts supplied the first gold.
- They had **no domesticated animals** or **animal husbandry**.
- Carts were never invented, because there were no large animals to pull them. No one had any use of the **wheel**.

The Dresden Codex, a pre-Columbian Maya book of the eleventh or twelfth century of the Yucatecan Maya in Chichén Itzá

[www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)





# *Mah Kina, the king; and the administration*



A painting based on ancient Maya depictions shows a lavish scene of revelry where members of the royal court sip a drink of spiced chocolate in the presence of their king.  
*ngm.nationalgeographic.com*

- The Maya Government was a **hereditary absolute monarchy**; the **high priest**, who was also king of the sacred city of Izamal, was consulted by the monarch on all important matters.
- The plebeians were **farmers, artisans, or merchants**; they paid taxes (paid in kind) and military service.
- Slaves** were chiefly prisoners of war and their children.
- Crimes** were punished with **death** - frequently by throwing over a precipice - **enslavement, fines**, or rarely, by **imprisonment**.

# agriculture

## The Mayan Creation Myth

*'Three divine creatures in the form of water dwelling feathered serpents decided to create humans to keep them company. 'True people' were modelled out of maize.'*

This shows the  
**importance of  
& dependence  
on agriculture**  
for the Maya.



- The Maya developed an **intensive land use system** and adapted to the marshy terrain.
- In sodden river basins, they established a dense **drainage network** of man made canals arranged geometrically.
- They grew **maize, cotton, rubber, tobacco** and **tomatoes** among other crops.



# royal blood



A temple mural from Bonampak shows noblewomen piercing their tongues in a bloodletting ritual.

*ngm.nationalgeographic.com*

- The Maya were totally **dependent on the annual** harvest. Rain was thus very important.

- The Maya considered **human life and blood** to be the **most precious sacrifice** possible to convince the Gods, and royal blood even more so.

- It was the **king's duty** to convince the gods to bring sufficient rain, and Maya royals used thorns, flints, and stingray spines to puncture their tongues, ears, and genitals.

- The **spilled blood** was collected on strips of paper and burned in homage to the gods.



# human sacrifice

- Victims faced one of several varieties of ritual sacrifice—**decapitation, drowning, repeated bloodletting**, or the **removal of their still-beating heart**.

- **Younger** the victims, more pleased the gods would be, because younger souls were considered purer.

- The **losing side** of the *ulama-ball* game was **ritualistically sacrificed** to the gods, their bodies buried underneath the court and their skulls turned into cores around which new rubber balls could be crafted.

- The object was to score by bouncing the **rubber ball** through **vertical stone rings** up to six metres high without touching it with either hands or feet.



Chaan Muan, eighth-century ruler of the Maya city of Bonampak, captures a victim for sacrifice in a jungle raid.

[ngm.nationalgeographic.com](http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com)



# war

- The Mayans were **expert and determined warriors**, using the bow and arrow, the dart with throwing-stick, the wooden sword edged with flints, the lance, sling, copper axe, shield of reeds, and protective armour of heavy quilted cotton.
- They understood **military tactics and signalling** with drum and whistle, and knew how to build **barricades and dig trenches**.
- Their object in war was rather to make **prisoners** than to kill. Noble prisoners were usually **sacrificed** to the gods, while those of ordinary rank became **slaves**.

War parade, showing shields and weapon

[www.authenticmaya.com](http://www.authenticmaya.com)



# astronomy



- Sophisticated **sky watchers**, the Maya tracked the movements of the stars and planets closely.
- The understanding and predictability of star and planet movements was critical to the **calculation of their calendar** and the **dating of important ceremonies**.
- The Maya believed that the Milky Way was the path to *Xibalba*, the **underworld**, and they scheduled momentous events such as battles and sacrifices around the journeys of Venus and perhaps Jupiter.

With Polaris as a hub, stars streak through the night in a time exposure of the House of the Magician at Uxmal.

*ngm.nationalgeographic.com*

Photograph by Simon Norfolk, with permission of Conaculta-INAH, Mexico



# the mayan calendar

Among other things, the Maya were pioneers of an **ancient system of Calendar keeping, Astrology and Mathematics** so precise that it rivalled, if not bettered, the present day, Georgian Calendar and Mathematics.



[www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)



They had a **Solar Calendar**, unlike the present day lunar calendar, which not only accounted for the extra  $1/4^{\text{th}}$  of a day every four years, but also was **precise to a 33<sup>rd</sup> of a second**.

According to their calendar, the same day with the same daylight time came, not once in four years, but once in 52 years, making it approximately **13 times more precise than the present day Georgian calendar**.



# art



Mayan ceramics were made in a **large variety of forms** and decorated with **complex scenes**. The Mayans designed works of art from **flint, bone, jade, obsidian, stucco, shell, and cotton textiles**. **Metal** was used to make **necklaces, bracelets and headdresses**.

Artists attached their name to their work.

- Maya art was **spiritual in nature**, designed to **appease the Gods**. Surviving Maya art today is in the form of **funerary and ritual objects**. The Maya **did not have metal tools or potter's wheels**.

- The focus of Maya art pieces is on **human figures (whether gods or mortals)**.

- The **Maya script**, which could be considered an art form itself, is **featured on most statues and carvings**.



- The **technical process** of metal working was also **highly developed** but as the **resources were scarce**, they only created ornaments in this media.

- Many of the **great programs** of Maya art, inscriptions, and architecture were **commissioned** by Mayan kings to **immortalize themselves** and ensure their place in history.



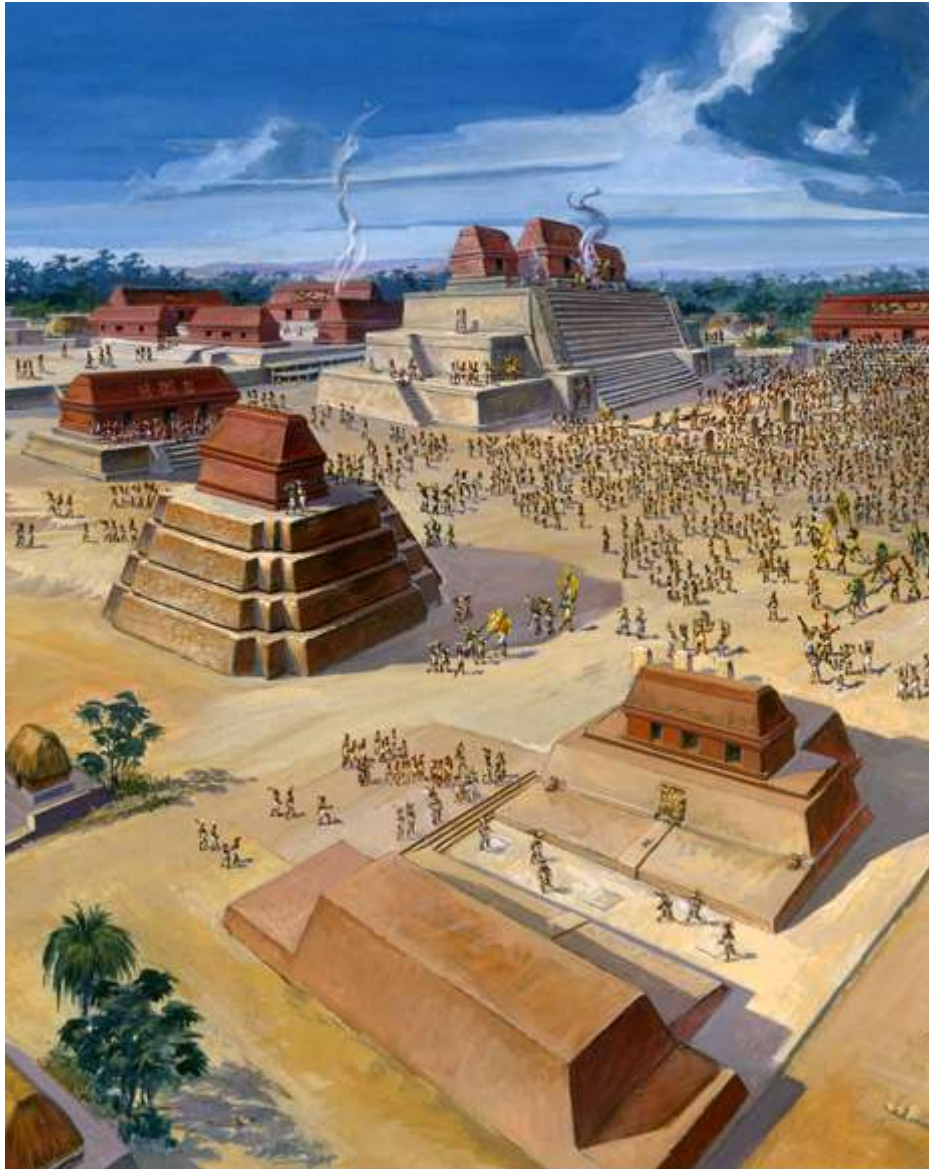
A large stone pyramid, likely Mayan or Aztec, stands in a grassy field. The sun is setting behind the pyramid, creating a bright orange and yellow glow. A full moon is visible in the sky to the right of the pyramid. The scene is framed by dark, silhouetted trees in the foreground.

# architecture

**Food surpluses** led to a massive **labour pool**, which allowed the construction of colossal architecture.

The great buildings were an **affirmation of the rulers' power and superiority**, and mark the appearance of imperialistic tendency

# Urban sprawl



- Maya cities were built somewhat **haphazardly** as dictated by the **topography** of each independent location. However, some **semblance of order** still prevailed.

- The **directional orientation** of temples and observatories was in accordance with the Maya interpretation of the orbits of the heavenly bodies.

- The city space was **divided by great monuments and causeways**. Open **public plazas** were the gathering places for people and the focus of urban design.

Large plazas surrounded by the most important governmental and religious buildings, such as the royal acropolis, great pyramid temples and ball-courts

The structures of lesser nobles, smaller temples, and individual shrines.

The less permanent and more modest homes of the common people.



# mayan hut



Example of a Maya house in Quintana Roo, Mexico.

- All Mayan structures **derive** from the ancestral hut.

- This traditional style of hut is **still visible** today, and hasn't changed since the dawn of Maya society, 3000 years ago.

**Wattle and daub** is a building material used for making walls, in which a woven lattice of wooden strips called *wattle* is *daubed* with a sticky material usually made of some combination of wet soil, clay, sand, animal dung and straw.

Vernacular dwelling-  
perfectly adapted to  
the tropical climate

Wattle and daub  
walls and a roof  
made of palms over a  
wooden frame

Each household  
consisted of one or  
two huts placed  
parallel to one  
another

Single interior space,  
lit by a square  
doorway

Rectangular or oval  
floor plan, the oval  
plan leads a conical  
form to the ends of  
the roof

# petrification

**Maya hut** exerted considerable influence on stone architecture.



It is represented in the **interior** spaces

- Arrangement of palaces
- Arrangement of sanctuaries built at the top of the pyramids
- Square door with a wooden lintel

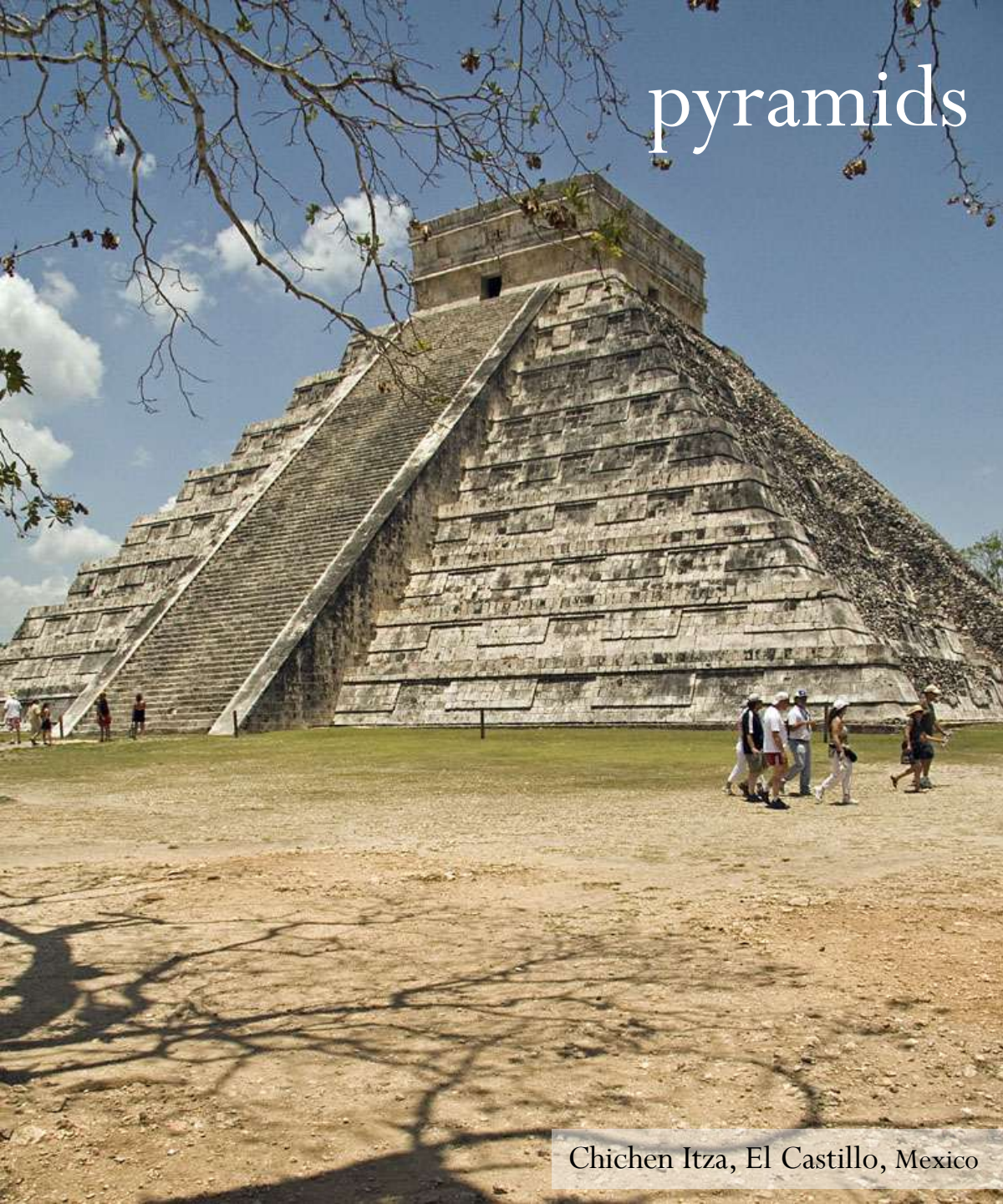
and in the **exterior** forms

- Sloping roof
- Façade of great buildings
- Ornamental friezes
- Buildings rise up on higher platforms- beyond the reach of the floods during the rainy season= pyramidal pedestals

image of Mayan house represented on palace frieze  
[www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)



# pyramids



Chichen Itza, El Castillo, Mexico

- The pyramids acted **as ceremonial monuments** to a dazzling reign.
- The pyramids were composed of **step-like foundations** (usually nine), and **one central staircase** that communicates with a temple on the topmost platform.
- The pyramids were **vertical abodes of the gods**.
- The **temples sitting atop** the towering Maya pyramids were impressive and decorated structures.
- Mayan tradition resulted in the **addition of new platforms on top of old ones** in order to place the ritual *cella* of the temples ever higher.
- Religious centres were always **rebuilt on the same site**, and thus a new, larger construction was always built on top of the old pyramid, which explains the huge scale.



# palaces



The eastern side of the Maya Palace of El Castillo at Xunantunich

[www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

- Palaces were **large** and often **highly decorated**, and usually sat **close to the center of a city** and housed the population's elite.

- Palaces were **horizontal homes of mere mortals**.

- They were often **one-story** and consisted of many **small chambers** and typically at least one **interior courtyard**.

- These structures appeared to take into account the needed **functionality** required of a residence, as well as the **decoration** required for their inhabitants stature.



# ball courts



- As an integral aspect of the Mayan lifestyle, ball courts were constructed **all over Central America** and often on a **grand scale**.

- The ball court itself was of a capital "**I**" **shape**.

- It was an **open space** closed in on the sides by two **parallel banks**, and by **walls surrounding the actual ‘pitch’**.

# tikal

- Situated in modern day **Northern Guatemala**
- **Maya Capital** for the longest time. Reached it's apex b/w 200 -900 A.D.
- City grows amongst groves of *kapok*, the sacred tree of the Maya.
- Site of six, very large, **Meso-American step pyramids**
- The largest structure is the **Temple of the Jaguar Priest**, at 70 meters height
- Remains of **royal palaces, smaller pyramids, palaces, residences**, and inscribed **stone monuments**.
- 7 courts for playing the **Mesoamerican ballgame**, including 3 in the "Seven Temples Plaza", a unique feature in Mesoamerica.





# palenque



- Set into the side of a mountain in **southern Mexico**, the elegant site of Palenque marks the western extent of the Maya territory.
- The architecture of Palenque was truly inventive. They **reduced the massive weight of the traditional corbel arch** by reducing its span with a dividing wall and the use of tribolated hollows that minimized the stress on load bearing walls.
- Many of its structures were built by the king known as **Pakal**, who was interred deep within the **Temple of the Inscriptions** with one of the greatest caches of jade ornaments yet found in a Maya burial.
- Allied with Tikal, the city faded around **A.D. 800** after it was defeated by Toniná, in league with Tikal's rival Calakmul.



Uxmal Staircase

*ngm.nationalgeographic.com*

# uxmal

- A **late bloomer** in the Maya world, the city of Uxmal in Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula continued to flourish in all its splendor after the fall of Tikal, Palenque, and the other great cities to the south in the ninth century.
- Uxmal was a **regional capital** during the Mayan Late Classic period.
- At its peak around **800-900 BC**, it's estimated that over **20,000** people lived in and around this metropolis.
- Much was built with **well-cut stones** set into a **core of concrete** not relying on plaster to hold the building together



# chichen itza



El Castillo  
[www.theancientweb.com](http://www.theancientweb.com)

- Chichen Itza was first settled around **435 BC**, however, in later centuries it became subject to waves of attacks from semi-nomadic tribes from northern Mexico.

- In no city is the importance that the Maya placed on **astronomy** and **astrology** more apparent than in the city of Chichen Itza.

- Kukulkán's Pyramid**, referred to as "**El Castillo**" in Spanish, has exactly **365 steps**, the number of full days in a solar year. It was built in such a way that during the spring and fall equinoxes a shadow is cast along the steps to resemble the **feathered serpent god slithering down** towards its sculpted head at the foot of the pyramid.

# building techniques

- Extensive rainforest provided **mahogany** and **sapodila**, used for **door lintels** and **sculptures**.
- For **concrete**, **lime mortar** was made by placing **crushed stone** on **wood** which was **set alight**
- Basement/ platforms-** *podia*
- Terraces and acropolises**
- Walls of **dressed stone**
- Corbelled** stonework **vaults**
- Lacking** many advanced **technologies**, Maya architecture required **manpower** in abundance.
- They utilized **limestone**, which remained **pliable while being quarried**. **Mortar** consisted of crushed, burnt, and mixed **limestone** and was used widely for **stucco finishing** and **post & lintel roofs**. For **common houses**, **wooden poles**, **adobe** and **limestone** were used.
- The **false arch** kept their structures generally **weighty** rather than airy.
- Raised ornamentation** in **concrete** work
- Standardized production** similar **blocks** to make up the components of **repetitive motifs**
- Highly **contoured stucco motifs** on sides of pyramids
- Mastery of **architect as sculptor**
- Polychromy** played huge role in paintings
- Buildings covered in **quick lime**, then painted





# decline

The Mayans went into decline in the **tenth century**. Because of **invasions from Central Mexico**, they broke into small town groupings in the rain forest. The last Mayan centre was **captured by the Spanish in the 17th century**, but about two million people of Mayan descent reside in the Yucatan today.

The **demands** they placed upon their environment **grew beyond the capacity of the land**. At it's peak, there were about 15 million people occupying the Mayan world. **Frequent skirmishes by warring clans** forced the Mayan populace to flee.

**Severe droughts, deforestation, a decline in large game animals and malnutrition;** that began around 800 A.D., coincided with a **sharp drop in new construction**.



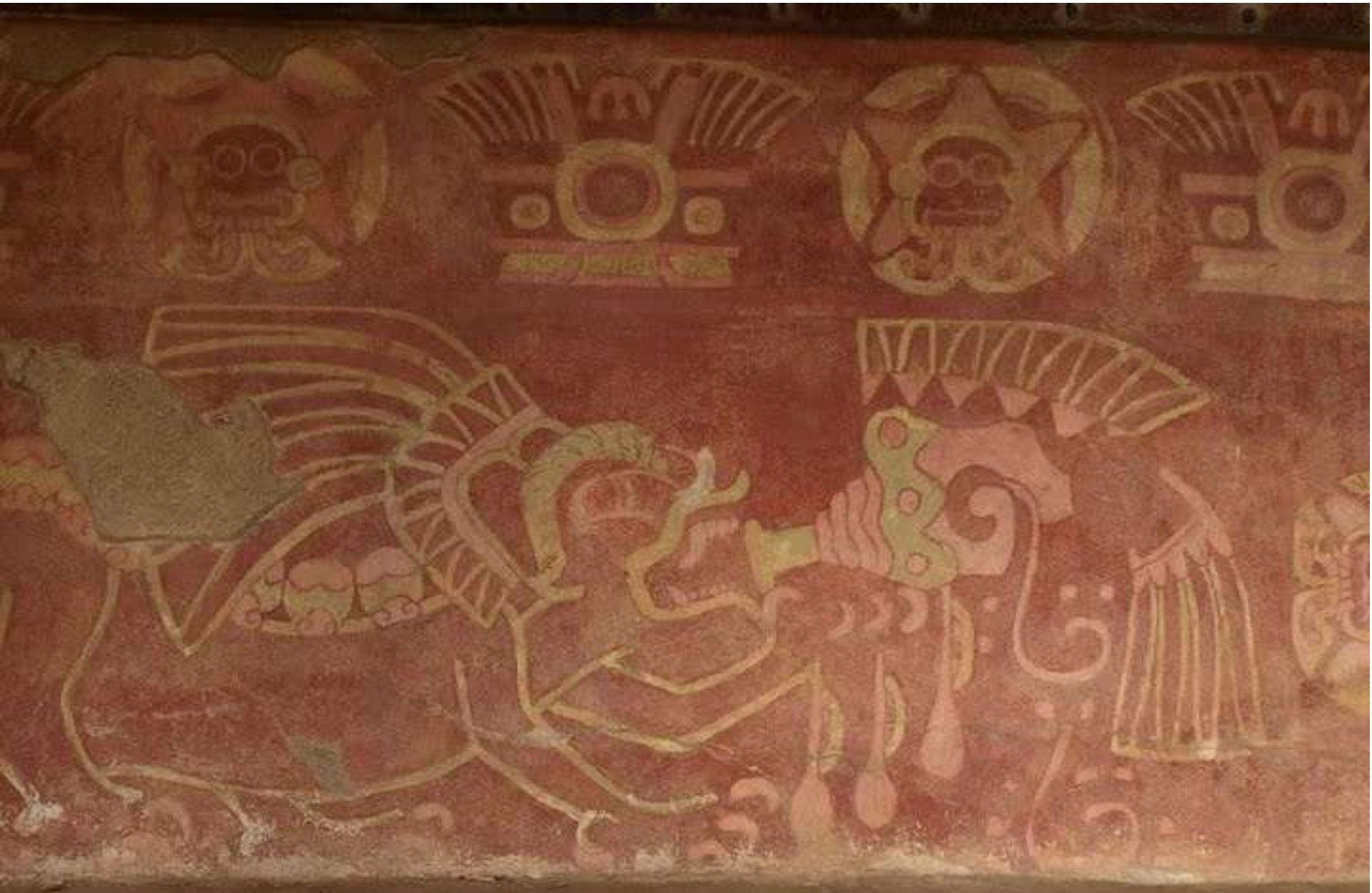
By the time the **Spanish Conquistadors** arrived, most of the Mayan sites had been **abandoned for hundreds of years**. They were in **ruins** and were being **overtaken by jungle**.

Introduction of **European diseases** decimated Mayan populations since they had developed **no immunity**.

The Spanish enforced **mandatory conversion to Christianity**. Those Maya who refused were **arrested and tortured**. Mayan **artefacts** were actively **destroyed** and all most of their **sacred texts burnt**. Today, many of their descendants throughout Central America still speak an evolved version of the Mayan language and have managed to retain some ancient Mayan practices.

# the aztec

Aztec Mural, Teotihuacan, Mexico





# setting



The Aztec Empire dominated Mesoamerica from **Mexico** and **Guatemala** to the territories of **Salvador** and **Honduras** in the 15<sup>TH</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries for almost 100 years. This was at the same time as the Inca Empire in Peru.

# origin



The Coat of Arms of Mexico, from Aztec mythology  
[www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

- The Aztec Empire history begins when the nomadic people first came from the north into the **Valley of Mexico** in the **1200's**.
- The most dominant at the time were the **Tenochcas** (later called Toltecs). They were **originally peaceful**, but their **wild background** and their ritual **of human sacrifice** was not tolerated by other peoples in the area.
- Things went too far when the **Tenochcas sacrificed a daughter of the king of Culhuacan** in a ceremony. The Culhuacans joined together with other tribes and, in 1300, the Tenochcas became under the control of the town of Culhuacan.



# beginning



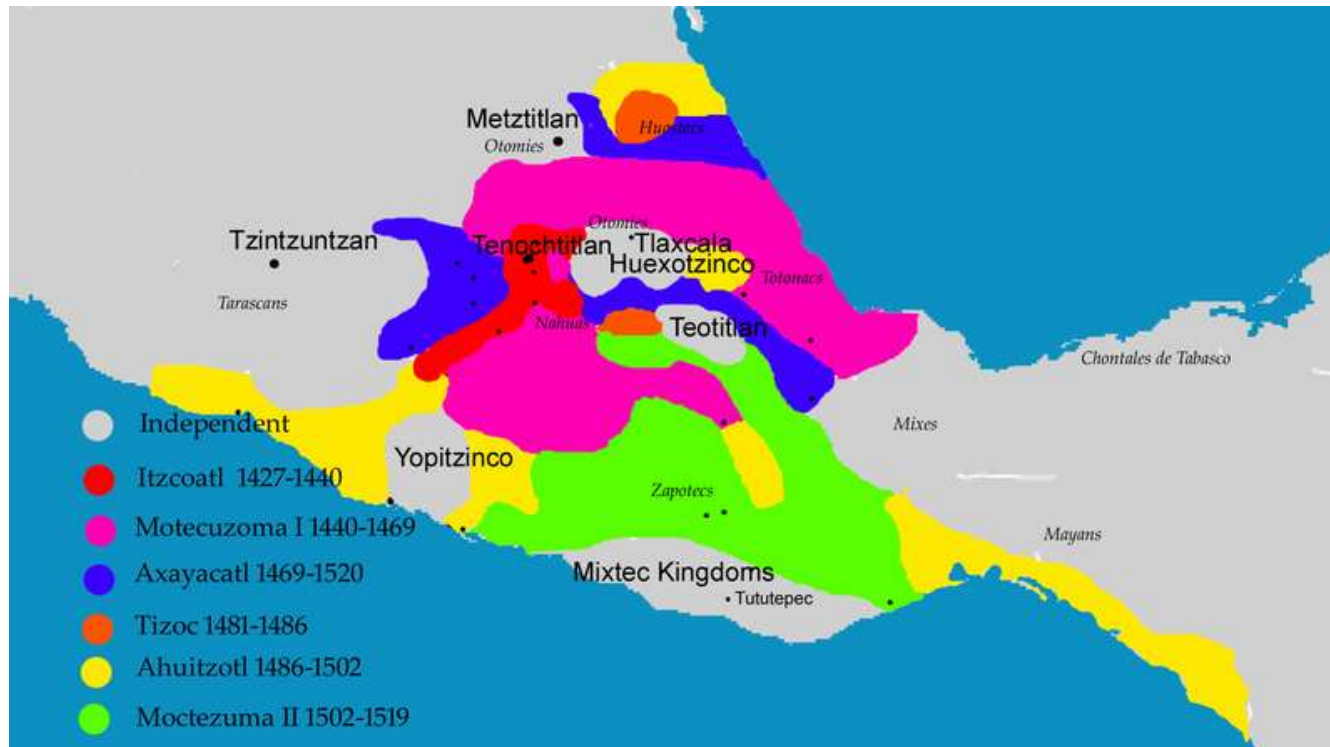
Aztec leaving behind Aztlan  
[www.theancientweb.com](http://www.theancientweb.com)

- Some escaped and settled on an island in the **middle of Lake Texcoco**. The town they started sometime between **1300 and 1375** was **Tenochtitlan**, or "**place of the Tenochcas**."

- With political genius, they chose a man by the name of **Acamapichtli** as their emperor. He was related to the last rulers of Culhuacan, and his lineage extended back in time to the great Toltec ruler Quetzalcoatl.

# expansion

- **Itzacoatl** (4rth ruler), and the chief who followed him- **Moctezuma I** (1440-1469) had **wars** in the Valley of Mexico and the southern regions of Vera Cruz, Guerrero, and Puebla. Because of these wars, **Tenochtitlan grew rapidly in size**.
- The Tenochcas slowly became more **powerful and skilled in warfare**, so that various peoples of the area wanted to become allies with them in the constant conflicts between the tribes.



Aztec empire map showing the conquest by different Aztec emperors  
[www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)



# dress

Dress was an important part of Aztec religion and daily life. The woven clothing was from **cotton**, for the leaders, and **maguey** fibers for the peasants.



Painting showing Aztec parade  
[ngm.nationalgeographic.com](http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com)

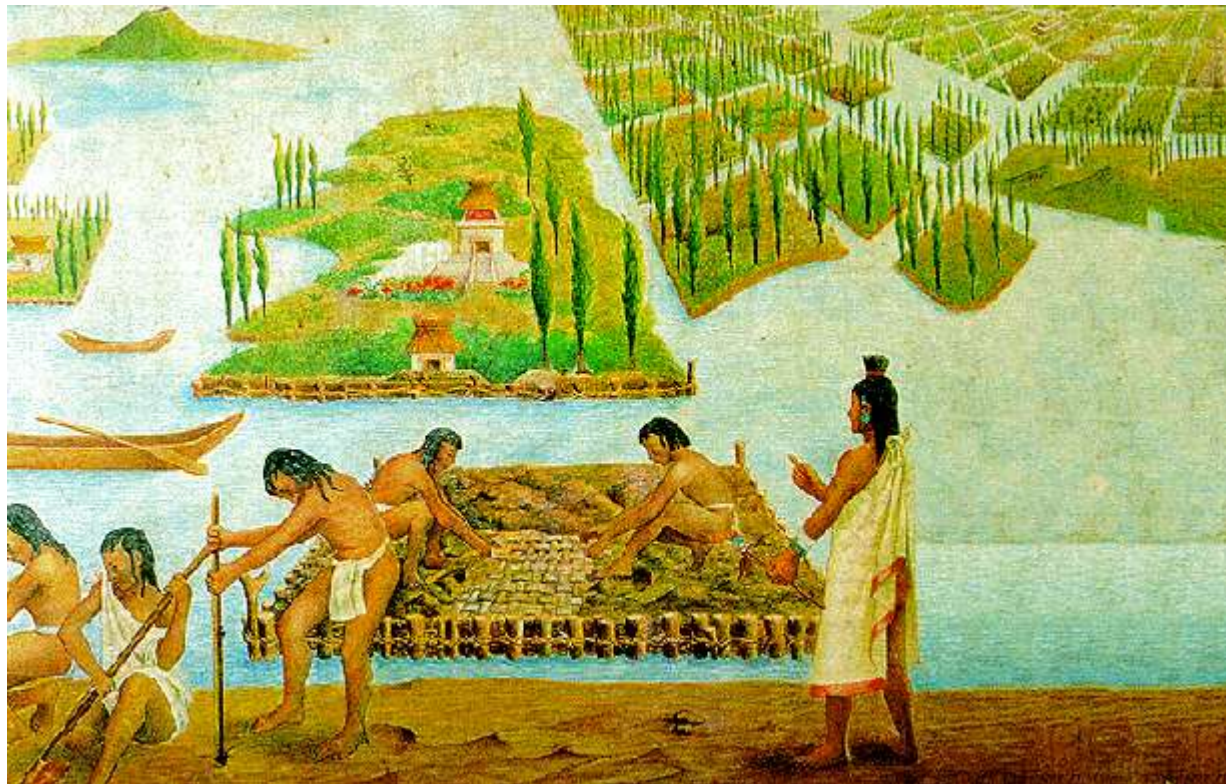
- **Gold** was important to a **noble's** dress. **Bright colors** were also a sign the individual was of high rank. Tropical **bird feathers** with their bright colors and natural shine used for **head dresses**.

- The Aztec **warriors** had **helmets** that were made of wood and fashioned to look like the **heads of animals**. They carried **shields** to fend off arrows and spears. On the cover of some shields there were figures of some animals that represented different strengths that the Aztecs believed they received from these animals.

- **Commoners and serfs** were not allowed to dress with extravagance. Sometimes the men only wore a loincloth, and women wore a **simple** cotton dress.

# agriculture

The Aztec were **dependent on agriculture** to support their large population. Since the city of Tenochtitlan was built on an island in the **middle of Lake Texcoco**, they devised **irrigation systems**, built **terraces** on nearby hillsides, and used **fertilizers** to increase usage of the soil.



The Aztecs tending to the chinampas  
[www.theancientweb.com](http://www.theancientweb.com)

## *Chinmpas* 'floating gardens'

- These **manmade islands** were made from **large woven reed mats** that were **piled with rich earth** from the bottom of the lake. The mud was rich in minerals and ideal for growing crops. **Fast growing willow trees** were planted so the root systems would grow to the bottom and anchor the islands.
- The islands were **planted with crops** that produced large amounts of food. They grew **tomatoes, avocados, squash, chili peppers, flowers** and **corn**- their principal crop.
- These island gardens **covered most of the southern part of the lake**. The size of the islands was not important, just so two canoes could go between them for navigation.



# food and drink



Aztec feast. Illustration from the Florentine Codex, Late 16th century  
[www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

- The principal food of the Aztec was a thin cornmeal pancake called a **tlaxcalli**, or **tortilla**, which they used to scoop or wrap up vegetables or meat (**tacos**).
- They **hunted deer, rabbits, ducks and geese** for meat. The only animals they **raised** for meat were **turkeys and dogs**.
- The Aztecs have been credited with the discovery of **chocolate**. Chocolate was for **warriors** and the **nobility**. When cacao was combined with **ground maize** it made a drink that was said to **help with strength** and was used in **religious ceremonies**.
- Fishermen used nets made from **fibers of the maguey cactus** to catch **fish, turtles, ducks, and frogs**.
- Octli** was an alcoholic drink that was used only by **nobility, royalty and warriors**. It was produced from the **sap of the maguey plant**. If a nobleman consumed too much of the drink and become intoxicated, he was put to **death**.

# education



Artist's Rendition of Aztec children attending a telpuchcalli  
[www.theancientweb.com](http://www.theancientweb.com)

- At the **age of fifteen** all **boys** went to a school called **telpuchcalli** ("house of youth"). They learned **history** and **religion**, and **civic duties** of everyday citizenship. All boys were trained in **war** and there was great **competition** between the schools, which sometimes lead to fights. Boys also had to work hard on their **family's land**.
- A **cuicacalli** was more of a **military school**. Children of the noble class attended a **calmecac**, a school that was connected to the **temples**.
- **Girls** went to a **separate** calmecac school.
- In Aztec society, females were thought of as **subordinate** to men so they were mostly **home-schooled**. They started **spinning at four** and **cooking at twelve**. The schooling of girls was a basic training for **marriage**, except that noble girls spent a year of adolescence helping in the **temples**.



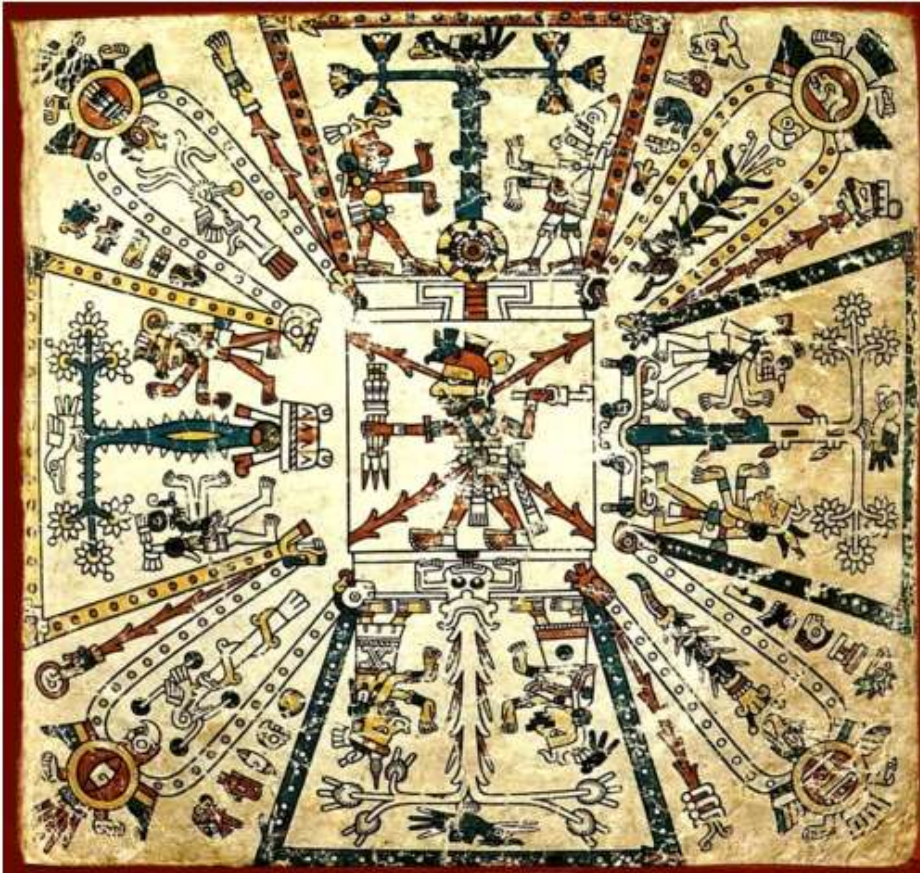
# calendar



The sun stone  
[www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

- Most of the Aztec advances in science were in the area of **astronomy**. Their most famous accomplishment was the building of a **stone calendar**, which took them 52 years to build. The calendar itself was 3 feet thick, 12 feet in diameter, and weighed about 24 tons.
- The Aztec year consisted of **eighteen months**, each having **20 days**. Each month was given a specific name. This arrangement took care of **360 days** (18x20), to which five dots were added inside the circle. These dots, known as **Nemontemi**, were sacrificial days.
- **Eight equally spaced holes** appear on the very edge of the calendar. The Aztec placed **horizontal sticks** here and the **shadows** of the sticks would fall on the figures of the calendar; thus the stone also served as a **sundial**.

# religion



Aztec cosmological drawing with the god Xiuhtecuhtli, the lord of fire and of the Calendar in the center and the other important gods around him each in front of a sacred tree. From the Codex Fejérváry-Mayer.

[www.theancientweb.com](http://www.theancientweb.com)

- The Aztecs worshipped about 1,000 gods, but the the sun god was the most important. Religious ceremonies were held in a temple called a teocalli. The temples had pools for ceremonial cleansing, gardens, living quarters for a priest, and racks to hold the skulls of victims.
- The most prominent part of the Aztec religious life was the role of human sacrifice.
- The Aztecs developed the idea that the gods were nourished by living hearts of captives.
- Human sacrifices were made to the gods for food to grow. During one famine, the Aztecs sacrificed over 10,000 people. Most of them had been captured in war.
- Art was a part of religion. The Aztec scribes and priests drew pictures about their gods and recorded religious events with glyphs and number symbols.



# economy



This detail shows a portion of the market of the Aztecs, where goods of all kinds were exchanged. This part shows the kinds of animals that were eaten, including lizards and dogs. The woman in the middle represents an Aztec goddess

[www.theancientweb.com](http://www.theancientweb.com)

- **Farming** was managed through the chinampa method of agriculture.
- A large number of **priests** and **craftspeople** lived in the main part of the city.
- The bulk of the economy depended on **extensive trade** of necessary and luxury items.
- Tenochtitlan was a true urban center. There was a permanent population, it had a **large and bustling market**, and it had the beginnings of economic class.
- Most people did not use currency, but **bartered directly**.

# aztecs: strengths and weaknesses

Traits of Civilization	Strength Leading to Power	Weakness Leading to Downfall
Religious beliefs and theocracy	United Culture Loyalty to the King	Many physical and human resources funneled into religious activities.
Powerful Army	Adds land, power, and prisoners for religious sacrifice.	Need for prisoners changes warfare style to less deadly and less aggressive.
Empire of Tribute States	Provides wealth and power and prisoners for religious sacrifice.	Tribute states are rebellious and need to be controlled.



# tenochtitlan



# venice of the new world



Tenochtitlan looking east from the shore of Lake Texcoco

[www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

- An island city, five miles square, Tenochtitlan was surrounded by Lake Texcoco, one of the five lakes in the Valley of Mexico. It was founded in 1325.
- Three great earth bridges, or causeways, led into the city. Canals were used as streets and people travelled everywhere by canoe. It was protected against floods by well-built dams.
- With palaces, gardens, fountains, the royal zoo, a market with 25,000 people busy buying and selling fantastic new objects and foods, aqueducts bringing fresh water into the city, sewage collection on large barges for use as fertilizers, and sacred ball courts, Tenochtitlan was more advanced than any city in Europe.
- At the height of Aztec civilization, around 1300-1500 CE, more than 200,000 people lived in Tenochtitlan.
- The Spanish conqueror Hernán Cortés captured the city in 1521, razing it to the ground. Upon its ruins he founded Mexico City.



# city plan



- Tenochtitlán was laid out in a **grid system** of **streets and canals** around a **ceremonial precinct** of **pyramids, temples, and palaces**.

- The city was divided into **four zones** or **campan**, each campan was divided on **20 districts (calpullis)**, and each calpulli was crossed by **streets** or **tlaxilcalli**.

- There were **three main streets** that crossed the city, each leading to one of the three causeways to the mainland. The calpullis were divided by **channels used for transportation**, with **wood bridges** that were removed at night.

- Each of the quadrants contains **housing developments**. The houses were **painted white** (so the light would reflect of them) and had **adobe roofs**. The houses were **packed tightly together** to make the only time when the sun would beam down on them high noon.

# ceremonial centre



The great pyramid at Tenochtitlan

[www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

- The ceremonial centre was a **walled square, 300 meters** to a side, right in the **centre of the city** where the public buildings, temples and schools were built. The ceremonial plaza **paved with stone**.

- There were about **45 public buildings** including **temples, ball courts and platforms for the gladiatorial sacrifice**. Also located nearby was the **cuicalli** or house of the songs, and the **calmecac**.

- The Aztec constructed **lavish temples** which were like the Mayan **pyramids** with terraced steps. Two of the temples were dedicated to their most important gods - **the sun god**, who was the god of war, and **the rain god**.

- Outside was the **palace of Moctezuma**. It also had two houses or **zoos**, one for birds of prey and another for other birds, reptiles and mammals. There was also a **botanical garden** and an **aquarium**. The aquarium had ten ponds of salt water and ten ponds of fresh water, containing fish and aquatic birds.



# downfall



Hernán Cortés

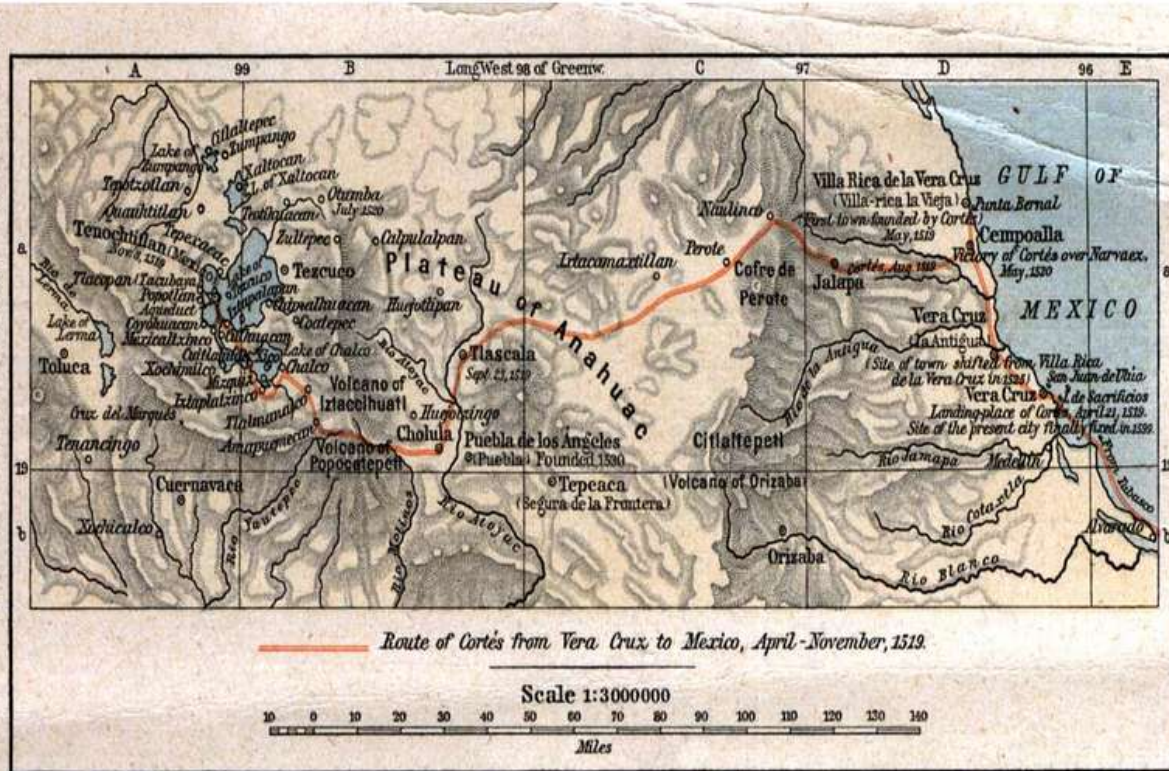
Cortés' route from Veracruz to Mexico

- The **Spaniard Hernán Cortés** led an expedition to Mexico in **1519**, sailing from Cuba to land on the eastern tip of the Yucatán Peninsula with a tiny fleet of 11.

- From there he proceeded inland to Tenochtitlán, the capital city of the Aztec Empire. Cortes set out from the Gulf Coast with **400 Spaniards, 16 horses, and several cannons** and soon reached Lake Texcoco. He was greeted by **Moctezuma II**.

- His white skin and beard convinced Montezuma II, the ruler of the Aztec Empire, and the Aztec people that Cortés was actually the **god Quetzalcoatl** returning as prophesied. The Spaniards and their native allies were **invited to stay** in one of the **palaces** by Moctezuma II.

- However, Cortés soon **imprisoned** Montezuma, and by **1521** **had conquered the Aztecs**. He **razed** Tenochtitlán and built **Mexico City**.





# the inca



This well-preserved mummy was removed from an ancient Inca cemetery located just outside Peru's capital, Lima. The site, adjacent to Puruchuco-Huaquerones, the largest Inca cemetery ever found, yielded dozens of human remains and artifacts dating back more than 500 years. The mummies were bundled in textile cocoons containing one or more adults or children.





# Early Stages

- The Inca people began as a tribe of the Killke culture in the **Cuzco** area around the **12th century AD**. Under the leadership of **Manco Capac**, they formed the small city-state of Cuzco (*Quechua Qosqo*).
- Under the leadership of the descendants of Manco Capac, the Inca state grew to absorb other Andean communities.
- In 1442, the Incas began a far-reaching expansion under the command of **Pachacuti**. He founded the Inca Empire (*Tawantinsuyu*), which became the largest empire in pre-Columbian America.



# Religion

- The Inca often **tolerated** or incorporated the religions of their conquered ayllus (clans).
- The Inca empire was a theocracy in which the Inca king was the descendant of Inti, the **sun god**.
- Inti Raymi**, the festival of the sun god, lasted nine nights, during which Sapa Inca would provide Aqhachicha, a maize beer, to first Inti, then himself, then the nobles, and finally to all people who attended.

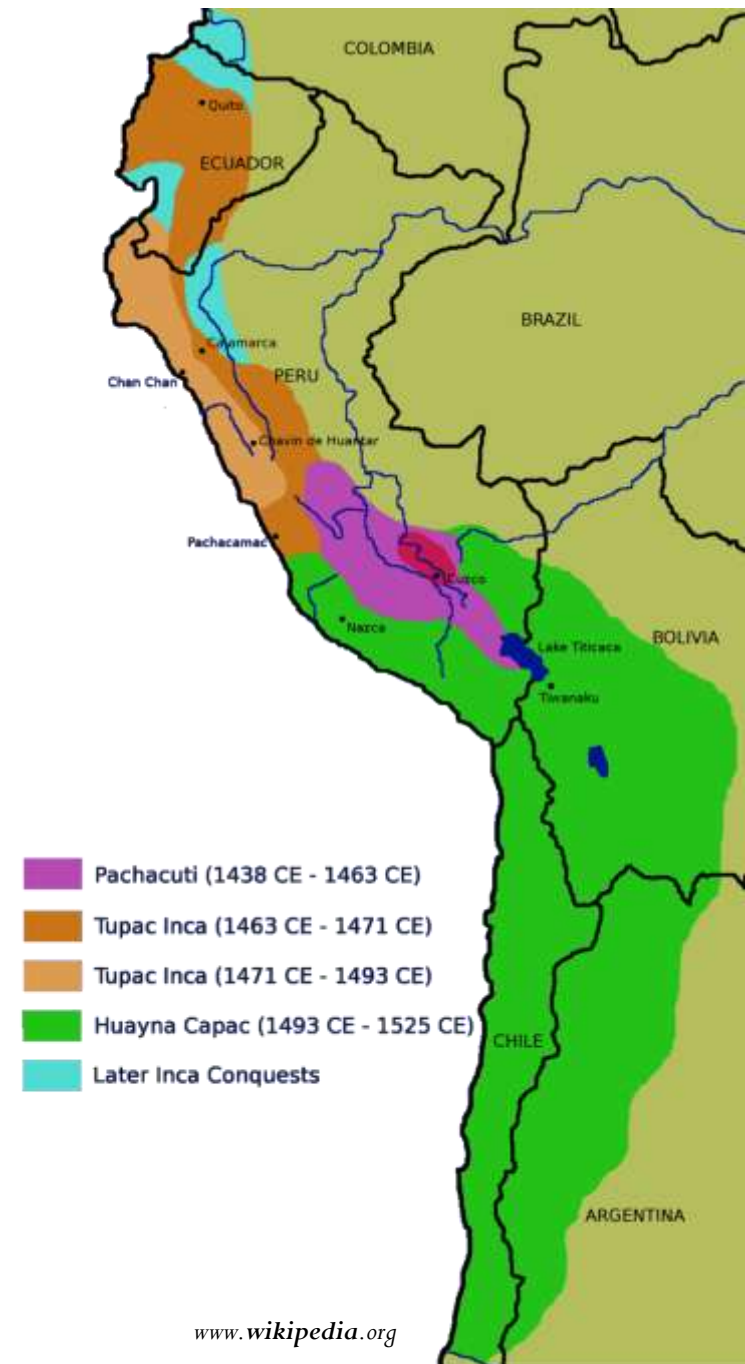
Inca religious ceremonies (representational)

[www.theancientweb.com](http://www.theancientweb.com)



# Expansion

- In **1438 AD**, under the command of Sapa Inca Pachacuti, the empire of **Tawantinsuyu** was established from conquered lands & Cuzco was rebuilt as its capital.
- It was a federalist system, consisting of a **central government** with the Inca at its head and **four provincial governments** with strong leaders: Chinchasuyu (NW), Antisuyu (NE), Contisuyu (SW), and Collasuyu (SE).
- The powerful Inca emperor is also thought to have built **Machu Picchu**, either as a family home or as a vacation retreat.



# Society

In Cuzco in 1589, **Don Mancio Serra de Leguisamo** — the last survivor of the original conquerors of Peru — wrote in the preamble of his will not without exaggeration, the following (in parts):

*"We found these kingdoms in such good order, and the said Incas governed them in such wise [manner] that throughout them there was **not a thief, nor a vicious man, nor an adulteress, nor was a bad woman admitted among them, nor were there immoral people.** I find myself guilty, for we have destroyed by our evil example, the people who had such a government as was enjoyed by these natives."*



Artist's rendition  
[www.theancientweb.com](http://www.theancientweb.com)



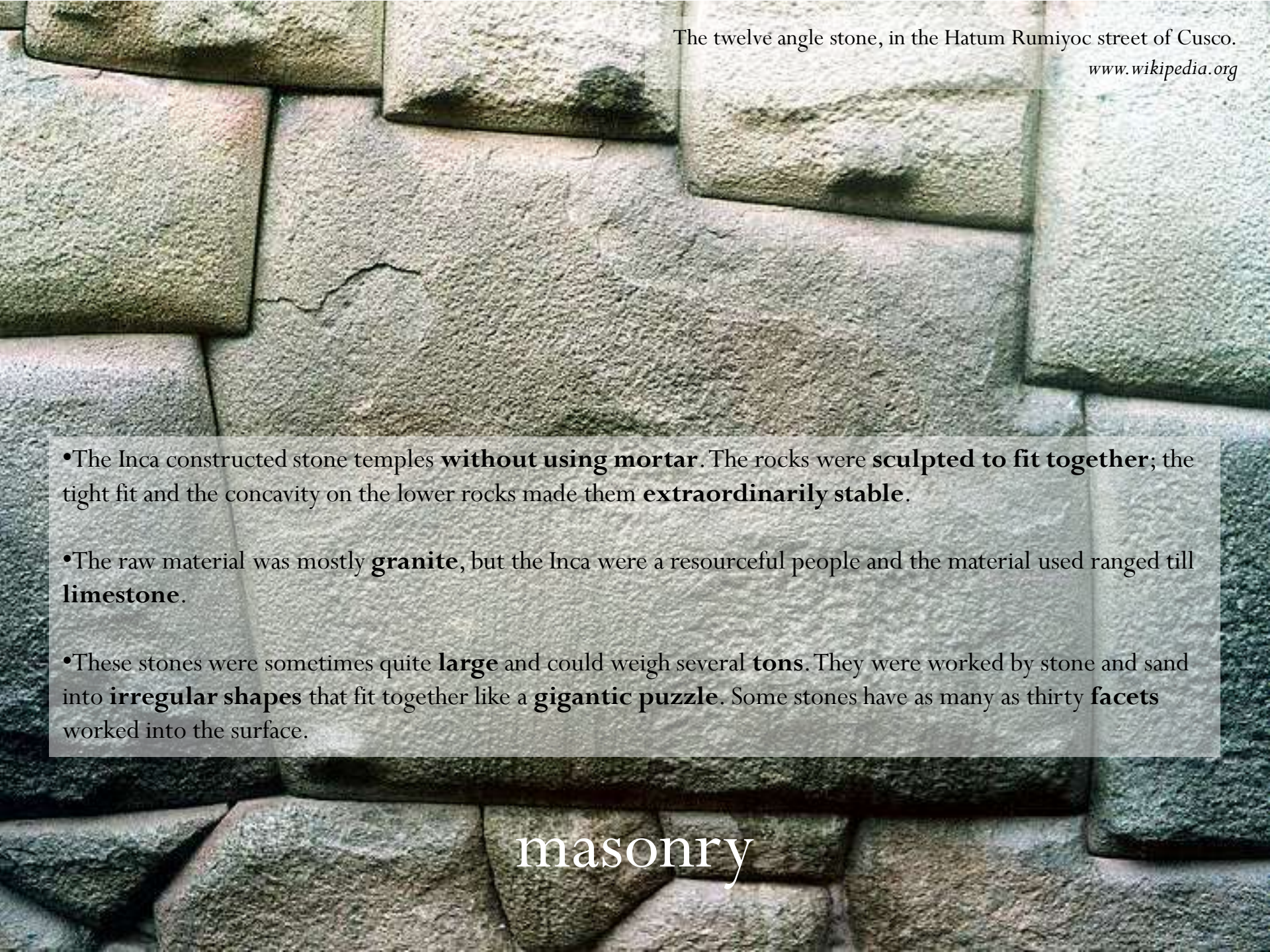


architecture

View from Temple of the Sun towards  
the Custom House, Machu Pichu

[www.bornemania.com](http://www.bornemania.com)





The twelve angle stone, in the Hatun Rumiyoq street of Cusco.

[www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

- The Inca constructed stone temples **without using mortar**. The rocks were **sculpted to fit together**; the tight fit and the concavity on the lower rocks made them **extraordinarily stable**.
- The raw material was mostly **granite**, but the Inca were a resourceful people and the material used ranged till **limestone**.
- These stones were sometimes quite **large** and could weigh several **tons**. They were worked by stone and sand into **irregular shapes** that fit together like a **gigantic puzzle**. Some stones have as many as thirty **facets** worked into the surface.

masonry





# CUZCO

- Cuzco was the Inca **capital city**, from the mid 15th century up until it was conquered by the Spanish in 1532. It was founded by **Manco Capac**, the founder of the Inca civilization.

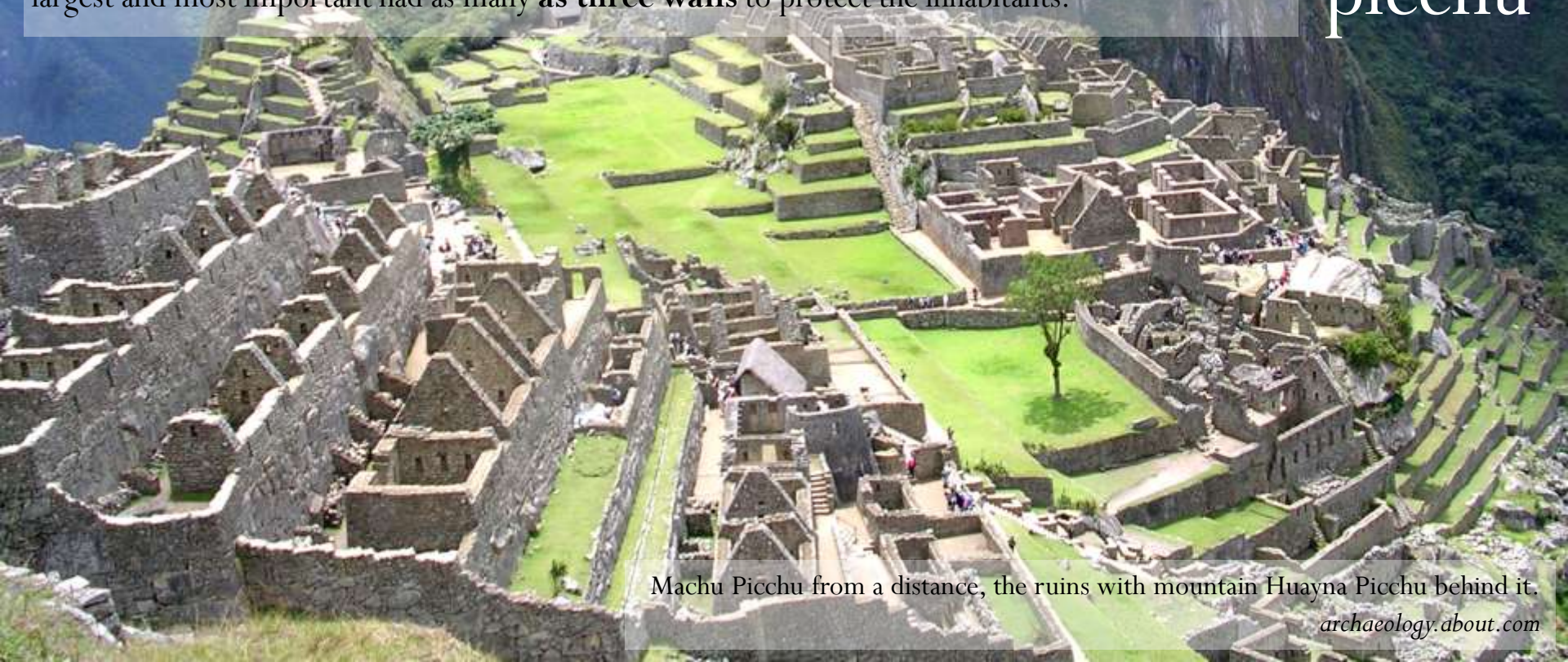
- Unlike many ancient capitals, Cuzco was primarily a **governmental and religious capital**, with **few residential structures**.

- The most important archaeological structure in Cuzco is the **Qorikancha**, also called the **Temple of the Sun**. In the sixteenth century, the Spanish built a church and convent on its massive foundations.



- The city lies on a ridge connecting the **Machu Pichu** and **Huayna Pichu** mountains.
- Machu Picchu looks down along the **steep mountain slope**, which has been girdled with **stone terraces** built to **stop soil erosion** and allow the raising of **crops**, including potatoes and cotton.
- There are nearly **200 rooms** at Machu Picchu, including **residences, temples, storage buildings, altars, observatories** and **shrines**.
- The room blocks are separated into **discrete groups**, separated by **narrow alleyways**.
- Most of the buildings have **single width walls** and had **steeply pitched thatch roofs**; the largest and most important had as many as **three walls** to protect the inhabitants.

machu  
picchu



Machu Picchu from a distance, the ruins with mountain Huayna Picchu behind it.

*archaeology.about.com*



# roads

*"The Incas built two roads the length of the country. **The Royal Road** went through the highlands for a distance of 3,250 miles, while the **Coastal Road** followed the seacoast for 2,520 miles."*  
~Cieza de León

- The Inca had an **extensive road system** which consisted of two main roads, the **Royal Road** and the **Coastal Road**.

- Including an estimated 40,000 kilometers, the roads were built for use in all kinds of climate, moving people and goods--and armies when needed--across the length and breadth of the empire.

- They allowed **runners to carry messages long distances** every day, allowing for a fast message system. A message could travel up to **240 kilometers every day**, then travel back down.

- There were many **tunnels, bridges, shrines, storage houses, fountains, drains** and **roadside lodgings** along the roads.

Stone Paved Trail Segment, Inca Trail  
[archaeology.about.com](http://archaeology.about.com)

# Crafts



- Almost all of the **gold and silver work** of the empire was **melted by the conquistadors**.

- Ceramics** were painted in numerous **motifs** including birds, waves, felines, and geometric patterns. The most distinctive Inca ceramic objects are the **Cuzco bottles** or “aryballos”.

- Textiles** showed **social status**, and could also be used as armor.

- Another important use of textiles was in the creation of rope bridges across gorges.



# Agriculture

- The Inca lived in **mountainous terrain**, which is not good for farming. To resolve this problem, **terraces** were cut into steep slopes, known as andenes, in order to plant crops. They also used **irrigation**.

- They grew **maize, quinoa, squash, tomatoes, peanuts, chili peppers, melons, cotton, and potatoes**.

- Though all of their agriculture was important, their main food source was potatoes.

- The Inca was the first civilization to plant and harvest **potatoes**.

- Quinoa was also a main crop. They would use their seeds to make different foods.

- The Inca were the first civilization to use the **freeze-dry method of storage**.

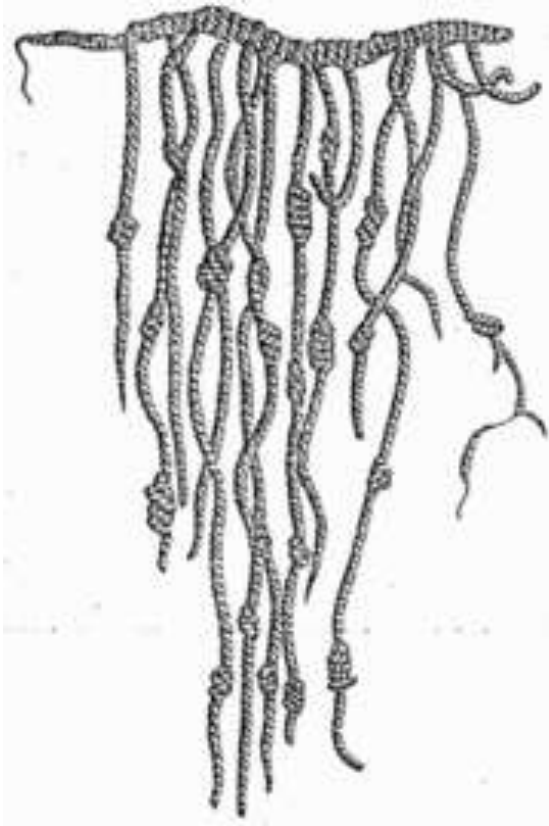


The Inca method of terraced farming



Some food grains that the Inca freeze-dried and stored

# Math & Metallurgy



- An important Inca technology was the **Quipu**, which were assemblages of knotted strings used to record information (like numerical data), the exact nature of which is no longer known.
- The Incas had no iron or steel, but they had **developed an alloy of bronze** superior to that of their enemies and contemporary Mesoamericans. The Andean nations prior to the Incas used arsenical bronze at best.
- The Incas introduced to South America the tin/copper alloy which is today commonly associated with "Bronze Age" metallurgy.

Inca method of calculation

[www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)



# War & Weaponry



- The Incas used weapons and had wars with other civilizations in the area. The Inca army was the most powerful in the area at that time, because they could turn an ordinary villager or farmer into a soldier, ready for battle, because every male Inca had to take part in war at least once.

- They went into battle with the beating of drums and the blowing of trumpets. The armor used by the Incas included:

- \* Helmets made of wood, cane or animal skin
- \* Round shields made of palm and cotton
- \* Cotton cloaks and metal plates above the breast and shoulders
- \* Armor for protection from darts and arrows

- The Inca weaponry included

- \* Bronze or bone-tipped spears or lances
- \* Knobbed Clubs
- \* Two-handed wooden swords with serrated edges (notched with teeth, like a saw)
- \* Clubs with stone and spiked metal heads
- \* Wooden slings and stones
- \* Stone or copper headed battle-axes
- \* Bolas or Ayllos - stones tied to ends of rope to be swung at enemies



Atahualpa



Francisco Pizarro

# Spanish Conquistadors

- Spanish conquistadors led by **Francisco Pizarro** explored south from Panama, reaching Inca territory by **1526**.
- The Spanish returned to Peru in 1532 while a **war of succession** between Huayna Capac's son Huascar and half brother Atahualpa was in full swing.
- Pizarro did not have a formidable force- he arrived with just **180 men, 27 horses and 1 cannon..** His victory at the Battle of Puna led to the foundation of the city of Piura in July 1532.
- Pizarro met with Atahualpa who had brought only a small retinue. Through interpreters, Pizarro requested the new Inca ruler **convert to Christianity**. The **Spanish attacked** the Inca's retinue, **capturing Atahualpa**



- Atahualpa offered the Spaniards enough **gold** to fill the room he was imprisoned in, and twice that amount in **silver**, in order to be freed.

- The Incas fulfilled this ransom, but Pizarro refused to release him. The Spanish finally decided to **put him to death** in August 1533.



- Pizarro then allowed his brother, **Huáscar**, to assume the throne. Several years later, Huáscar led a **revolt against the Spaniards**: he was defeated, forced to take refuge in the mountains of Vilabamba, and there **assassinated** by fellow refugees.

- The last pretender to the Inca throne, Tupac Amaru, youngest son of Huáscar was beheaded by the Spaniards and **the Inca Empire to an end.**

The conquistadors stripping the Inca of power

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